

## LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY A HOLIDAY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

FEBRUARY 1, 1924—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. KELLER, from the Committee on the District of Columbia, submitted the following

### REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 20.]

The Committee on the District of Columbia, to which was referred the bill (H. R. 20) to declare Lincoln's birthday a legal holiday in the District of Columbia, having had the same under consideration, report the same back with the recommendation that it do pass.

The following is the bill:

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That the 12th day of February in each year, being the anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, is hereby made a legal holiday within the District of Columbia, to be known as Lincoln Day, and in its observance and effect it shall be subject to all the provisions of law applicable to holidays within said District.

The effect of the passage of this measure would be the observance of Lincoln's birthday as a legal holiday in the District of Columbia in the same manner as is now provided for the observance of Washington's birthday.

A similar bill, unanimously reported from the Committee on the Judiciary during the second session of the Sixty-sixth Congress, passed the House by a large majority on March 17, 1920, but was not reported to the Senate from the committee to which it had been referred in that body. On July 29, 1921, the House Committee on the District of Columbia reported favorably a similar bill (H. R. 2310), but that bill did not pass the House.

A bill to make Lincoln's birthday a legal holiday in the District of Columbia has been unanimously indorsed by the Department of the Potomac, Grand Army of the Republic, on several occasions. The following resolution was unanimously adopted on February 12, 1921:

*Resolved,* That the Department of the Potomac, Grand Army of the Republic, in mass meeting assembled in the Congregational Church, Washington, D. C., for the



purpose of eulogizing and honoring the name and principles of Abraham Lincoln, and believing that the time has come when his birthday should be declared a legal holiday in the same manner as the great Washington's birthday has been made a legal holiday in the District of Columbia, respectfully but very earnestly petitions the Congress of the United States to enact a law declaring the birthday of Lincoln a legal holiday in said District.

The following resolutions were adopted at the fifty-seventh national encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic at Milwaukee, Wis., on the 7th day of September, 1923:

#### LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY.

Whereas the following States, 28 in number, have laws making February 12, the anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, a legal holiday in said States, namely: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming; and

Whereas the Department of the Potomac, Grand Army of the Republic, has on several occasions adopted resolutions requesting the Congress of the United States to declare Lincoln's birthday anniversary to be a legal holiday in the District of Columbia, in the same manner as Washington's birthday anniversary has been made a legal holiday in said District: Therefore

*Resolved*, That we, the members of the fifty-seventh national encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic, in regular session assembled, this 7th day of September, 1923, in the city of Milwaukee, Wis., believing that the time has arrived when the memory of Abraham Lincoln, the chief of the preservers of the Union of States, should be honored in the same exalted degree as the memory of Washington, the chief of the founders of that Union, earnestly and in full agreement, join with the Department of the Potomac in urging Congress to make the anniversary of the birth of Lincoln a legal holiday in the District of Columbia, where he rendered service of inestimable value to our country and the entire world, and died a blessed martyr to that righteous cause for which 512,000 of our comrades in arms during the Civil War "gave the last full measure of devotion."

A large number of governors, among them governors of Southern States, have indorsed a measure similar to the pending bill.

The legislatures of 28 States have passed laws making Lincoln's birthday a legal holiday, as follows:

	Population.		Population.
California .....	3, 426, 536	Nevada .....	77, 407
Colorado .....	939, 376	New Jersey .....	3, 155, 347
Connecticut .....	1, 380, 585	New York .....	10, 384, 144
Delaware .....	223, 003	North Dakota .....	645, 730
Illinois .....	6, 485, 098	New Mexico .....	360, 347
Indiana .....	2, 930, 544	Ohio .....	5, 759, 368
Iowa .....	2, 403, 630	Oregon .....	783, 389
Kansas .....	1, 769, 257	Pennsylvania .....	8, 720, 159
Kentucky .....	2, 416, 013	South Dakota .....	635, 839
Michigan .....	3, 667, 222	Utah .....	449, 446
Minnesota .....	2, 386, 311	Washington .....	1, 356, 316
Missouri .....	3, 403, 547	West Virginia .....	1, 463, 610
Montana .....	547, 593	Wisconsin .....	2, 631, 839
Nebraska .....	1, 295, 502	Wyoming .....	194, 402
Population of the 48 States in 1920 .....			105, 710, 620
Population of the States which have made the anniversary of Lincoln's birth a holiday .....			69, 891, 460
Population of States where not a holiday .....			35, 819, 160

It will thus be seen that a considerable majority of the States of the Union have made Lincoln's birthday a holiday. It will also be



seen that a large majority of the population of the entire country is in the States that have already made his birthday anniversary a holiday.

There is no doubt in the minds of the majority of your committee that were this measure submitted to the American people for an expression of their opinion upon it a tremendous majority of them would most heartily approve the action of Congress in thus honoring the name and memory of Abraham Lincoln, "the preserver of the Union."

The people of this District have not the power to declare Lincoln's birthday a legal holiday. That authority under the Constitution rests alone in Congress. In view of the fact that his greatest work was done here, that his life was sacrificed here as a martyr to the principles of liberty and self-government, "A government of the people, by the people, for the people," it seems both fitting and proper that his name and memory should be honored as Washington's name and memory have been honored.

As Washington is revered and honored as the Father of his Country, so is Abraham Lincoln enrolled as the greatest martyr to human liberty who gave his life in support and defense of that Government.

It has been said that "we will all be forgotten 100 years hence." No; not all will be forgotten. The names of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington will not perish from the earth. Together their names are blended in one immortal wreath, and in all the centuries to come will increase in brilliancy and continue as a beacon light to all inhabitants of the world who yearn for liberty and justice.

The infamous crime of John Wilkes Booth, the assassin, caused genuine heartfelt sorrow throughout the civilized world, and many were the beautiful tributes of love and sympathy received by our Government from foreign governments, municipalities, and private individuals, which were printed in a large volume in 1866, entitled "Tribute of the Nations to Abraham Lincoln." Several of these tributes have been selected and printed with this report. [See appendix.]

Lincoln greatly admired Washington. On February 22, 1842, just after he had passed his 33d birthday, he delivered a lengthy address on temperance before the Springfield (Ill.), temperance society, at the close of which he delivered the following eloquent eulogy of him who was "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen:"

This is the one hundred and tenth anniversary of the birthday of Washington. We are met to celebrate this day. Washington is the mightiest name of earth—long since mightiest in the cause of civil liberty, still mightiest in moral reformation. On that name no eulogy is expected. It can not be. To add brightness to the sun or glory to the name of Washington is alike impossible. Let none attempt it. In solemn awe pronounce the name, and in its naked, deathless splendor leave it shining on.

The majority of your committee, believing that Washington and Lincoln are America's most illustrious citizens and statesmen, alike worthy and deserving of the highest honors of their country, which they served so well, and believing that both should be honored alike in the matter of a legal holiday bearing their respective names, earnestly recommend that the House pass the bill (H. R. 20) to declare Lincoln's birthday a legal holiday in the District of Columbia.



## APPENDIX.

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

[From Appendix to Diplomatic Correspondence of 1865.]

[By Hon. SALVADOR CAMACHO ROLAND. (Translated from *La Opinion* (Bogota) June 7, 1865.)]

The name with which we head these lines will be one of the most famous which this country, fruitful in great men and great events, will transmit to the admiration and love of posterity. Of the many great men whom war, diplomacy, and politics have raised upon the wings of human passions, none will enjoy a history, a fame, so pure and imperishable as he who, controlling the turbulent waves of the most colossal civil war of modern times, preserved order with liberty, and maintained the integrity of a great Republic, while the bonds of its society were being broken into atoms by the advent of a new civilization.

This will not be because history will present him brandishing a flaming sword over heaps of slain enemies, disposing in despotic councils the fate of peoples, or erasing and changing the lines of territories, or putting his foot on the unchained liberal spirit of his age; but because, as in all great revelations of truth to man, the divine spirit of a great idea incarnated itself in a humble being and inspired him with the faith, the courage, and the perseverance to draw it safely from the agitated ocean, through breakers and in spite of hostile winds, to the port of safety and of triumph.

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The last phase of his public character, and which most appeals to our lively sympathy, was his magnanimity. The formidable and groundless insurrection, which had threatened to destroy the unity and force of the country, subdued, his first and only purpose was to reorganize the conquered territories, returning them their existence and their own governments, without retaining for a moment longer than necessary and just the discretionary power with which the rebellion had armed him. He never thought from the first of humbling and punishing, or of showing that healthy energy which is always the inevitable source of armed reaction. The stupid assassin, more stupid than his murderous bullet, without doubt did not think that, amidst the dangerous fermentation of passions which follows a day of victory over brethren, the surest guaranty of restoration and liberty to the South was the noble life of Mr. Lincoln.

In the vulgar sense of human language, Abraham Lincoln was certainly not a great man. He had not the dazzling prestige of victorious achievements in war; he was not a conqueror of peoples and countries; he never enveloped his plans in the gloomy obscurity of mystery or dissimulation; he never took to himself the credit of results which followed from the inscrutable decrees of Providence; he was free from that satanic pride which, in others, supplies the want of true greatness. But he possessed something greater than all these, which all the splendors of earthly greatness can not equal. He was the instrument of God. The Divine Spirit, which in another day of regeneration took the form of an humble artisan of Galilee, had again clothed itself in the flesh and bones of a man of lowly birth and degree. That man was Abraham Lincoln, the liberator and savior of the greatest Republic of modern times. That irresistible force, called an idea, seized upon an obscure and almost common man, burnt him with its holy fire, purified him in its crucible, and raised him to the apex of human greatness, even to being the redeemer of a whole race of men.

He whose boyhood was passed at the plow handle in the then solitary prairies of Illinois, whose early manhood was dragged out in fatigue at the oar of a Mississippi River flatboat, and the only repose of whose maturer years was the noisy labors of the forum, that man was called to be the arbiter of the fate of his country—the great man of state, whose destiny it was to manage the rudder during the most frightful storm of the age. In the critical hour of trial and danger all rested on him. \* \* \* There is in his last words something of the fire of the old prophets. "Fondly do we hope," he said in his inaugural address of the 4th of March last, "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may pass away. Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash be paid by another drawn by the sword, as was said 3,000 years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'" And that nothing should be wanting to complete the true grandeur of his life, the hand of crime



snatched it from him in the midst of the triumph of his cause and bound his temples, already pale from the vigils and anguish of four years, with the resplendent crown of the martyr.

Abraham Lincoln is dead, but his work is finished, and sealed forever with the veneration which God has given to the blood of martyrs. He who was yesterday a man is to-day an apostle; he who was the center at which the shots of malice and hatred was aimed is now consecrated by the sacrament of death; he who was yesterday a power is to-day a prestige, sacred, irresistible. His voice is louder and more potent from the mansion of martyrs than from the Capitol, and the cry which was boldly raised among the living is mute before the majesty of the tomb.

Abraham Lincoln passes to the side of Washington—the one the father, the other the savior of a great Nation.

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This great work has cost a great price. Humanity will have to mourn yet for many years to come the horrors of that Civil War; but above the blood of its victims, above the bones of its dead, above the ashes of desolate hearths, will arise the great figure of Abraham Lincoln as the most acceptable sacrifice offered by the nineteenth century in expiation of the great crime of the sixteenth. Above all the anguish and tears of that immense hecatomb will appear the shade of Abraham Lincoln as the symbol of hope and pardon.

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[Mr. Motley to Mr. Seward.]

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,  
Vienna, April 30, 1865.

SIR: The news of the great tragedy which has brought desolation upon our country, in the very moment of our highest joy, reached this place on the 26th. This is the first post which leaves Vienna since the receipt of the intelligence.

I shall not even attempt to picture the consternation which the event has caused throughout the civilized world, nor to describe the anguish which it has excited in my own heart, as in that of every loyal American, whether at home or abroad.

\* \* \* \* \*

I do not fear to express the opinion that the name of Abraham Lincoln will be cherished, as long as we have a history, as one of the wisest, purest, and noblest magistrates, as one of the greatest benefactors to the human race, that have ever lived.

I believe that the foundation of his whole character was a devotion to duty. To borrow a phrase from his eloquent inaugural address of this year, it was his "firmness in the right, as God gave him to see the right," which enabled him to discharge the function of his great office, in one of the most terrible epochs of the world's history, with such rare sagacity, patience, cheerfulness, and courage. And God, indeed, gave him to see the right, and he needs no nobler epitaph than those simple words from his own lips.

So much firmness with such gentleness of heart, so much logical acuteness with such almost childlike simplicity and ingenuousness of nature, so much candor to weigh the wisdom of others, with so much tenacity to retain his own judgment were rarely before united in one individual.

Never was there such vast political power placed in purer hands; never did a heart remain more humble and more unsophisticated after the highest prizes of earthly ambition had been obtained.

Certainly "Government of the people, by the people, for the people"—to quote again his own words—shall never perish from the earth so long as the American people can embody itself in a character so worthy to represent the best qualities of humanity—its courage, generosity, patience, sagacity, and integrity—as these have been personified in him who has been one of the best of rulers and is now one of the noblest of martyrs. \* \* \*

I have followed his career and every public act and utterance with an ever-increasing veneration for a character and intellect which seemed to expand and to grow more vigorous the greater the demand that was made upon their strength.

And this feeling, I believe, is shared not only by all Americans worthy of the name, but by all inhabitants of foreign lands who have given themselves the trouble to study our history in this most eventful period. \* \* \*

The whole diplomatic corps, with scarcely an exception, have called upon me as representative of the United States, and their warm and sincere expressions



of sympathy at our national loss, of cordial good will for the Union, and, more important than all, of decided respect and admiration for the character of our lamented President, have been most grateful to my heart.

The journals of Vienna have vied with each other in eloquent tributes to the virtues of Mr. Lincoln, in expressions of unaffected sympathy for the great cause of which he was the impersonation, and of horror at the accursed crime by which one of the best men has been taken from the world.

On June 3, 1903, at Freeport, Ill., on the site of the Lincoln-Douglas debate in 1858, where a monument commemorating the event was being unveiled, President Roosevelt, in praise of Lincoln, said:

We meet to-day to commemorate the spot on which occurred one of those memorable scenes in accordance with which the whole future history of nations is molded.

Here were spoken the winged words that flew through immediate time and that will fly through that portion of eternity recorded in the history of our race.

Here was sounded the keynote of the struggle which, after convulsing the Nation, made it in fact what it had only been in name, at once united and free.

It is eminently fitting that this monument, given by the women of this city in commemoration of the great debate that here took place, should be dedicated by the men whose deeds made good the words of Abraham Lincoln and the soldiers of the Civil War. [Cheers and applause.]

#### DEEDS FOLLOWED WORDS.

The word was mighty, but had it not been for the word the deeds could not have taken place. But without the deeds, the words would have been the idlest breath.

It is forever to the honor of our Nation that brought forth the statesman who, with far-sighted vision, could pierce the clouds that obscured the sight of the keenest of his fellows and could see what the future inevitably held.

And, moreover, that we had back of the statesman and behind him the men to whom it was given to fight in the greatest war ever waged for the good of mankind, for the betterment of the world.

I have literally but a moment here. I could not resist the chance that was offered me to stop and dedicate this monument, for great though we now regard Abraham Lincoln, my countrymen, the future will put him on an even higher pinnacle than we have put him. [Applause.]

#### HIS ORATORY ENDURING.

In all history I do not believe that there is to be found an orator whose speeches will last as enduringly as certain of the speeches of Lincoln.

And in all history, with the sole exception of the man who founded the Republic, I do not think there will be found another statesman at once so great and so single-hearted in his devotion to the weal of his people.

We can not too highly honor him.

And the highest way in which we can honor him is to see that our homage is not only homage of words; that to loyalty of words we join loyalty of the heart, and that we pay honor to the memory of Abraham Lincoln by so conducting ourselves, by so carrying ourselves as citizens of this Republic, that we shall hand on undiminished to our children and our children's children the heritage we received from the men who upheld the statesmanship of Lincoln in the council and who made good the soldiership of Grant in the field. [Cheers and applause.]